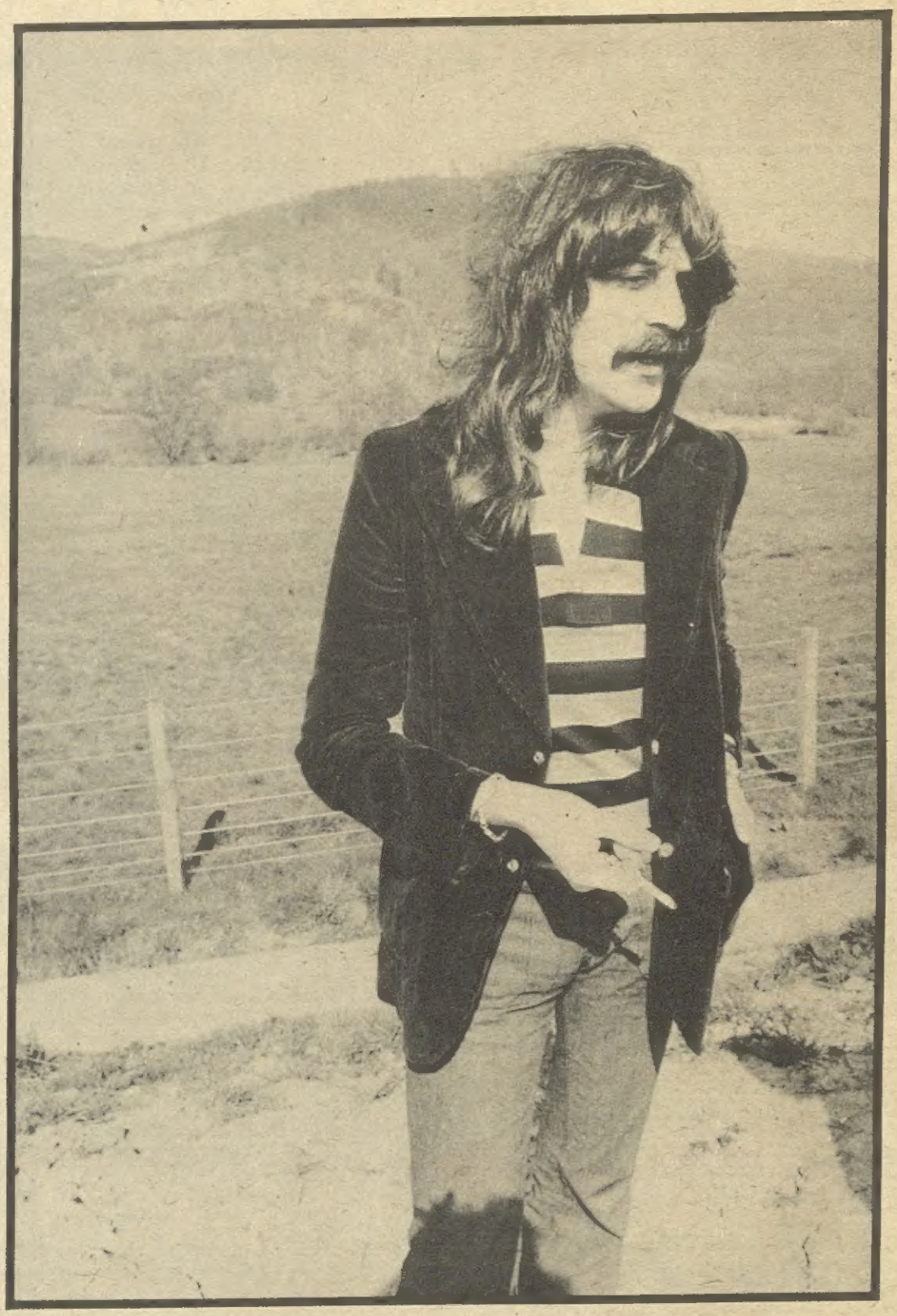
*As **ELP** power-blitzed Wembley last week (see centre pages), heavy league stablemates **DEEP PURPLE** returned fresh from rampant triumphs in the U.S. to kick off their 1974 British tour in Scotland. **CHERRY RIPE**, in Los Angeles, reports on Purple's progress to a position of top-draw British band in the States. **ANDREW TYLER** picks up the threads of this Transatlantic Heavy Metal Yarn via a train bound for Dundee.*



Who's the loudest in the land?

'Don't believe what they tell you. No other band's got this kind of volume.'

"THREE MINUTES," calls Ossie Hoppe, Purple's fastidious German-born roadmanager (adding "2.58 . . . .57 . . ." as he gently leads off all those wanting backstage seats). But Jon Lord still goes on fooling round on his Arp keyboard.

It's Purple's last gig for this five week Stateside tour, and they still aren't showing any signs of strain. In fact a more relaxed pre-gig dressing room would be hard to find.

America for Deep Purple is a huge success story, and getting bigger. Out front there are another 18,000 kids waiting for them — and it's their third gig in the Los Angeles area in four days.

Tonight, the San Diego gig was due to start at eight. And that's a hundred miles outside L.A.

Purple were to leave in a convoy of eight sleek black limousines for the airport and their own waiting jet, parked, as it happened, on the tarmac next to the all-black Hugh Hefner skymachine with its white bunny on the tailfin, in the Private Jet section of L.A. Airport.

"Some people get funny about the money," says Lord. "But we've got just five years to do what those company directors take fifty."

It's a twenty minute flight — just time for two glasses of champagne — before everyone's speeding off again in slick black convoy to the Sports Arena, Touchstop.

THE CROWD are nearly at frenzy point, even though they've already sat through long sets from the support bands, Tucky Buzzard and Savoy Brown.

Purple hit the stage and are straight into a heavy instrumental jam.

Lord gets into some Emersonesque gyrations with his organ. "Ah yes!" he says. "But I was doing it before they were." Later, he pays tribute to The Face's Ian MacLagan: "It was Mac taught me to play." Coming from Lord, that's some compliment.

(Purple have now completely surpassed The Faces in Stateside popularity. The 'California Jam' which they played two days before, drawing a quarter of a million people, had grossed two million dollars. And rumours had it that Purple had had a share in the gate, which is smart business in the US).

"This is the last gig of our tour," hollers David Coverdale. "So it's gonna be a blast-aah!" They take straight off into "Burn".

"Gonna give you ta Mista Lord," announces Blackmore.

Lord and Paice take over the next two numbers, Paice's drums turning blue, pink and purple, while Lord throws his organ through the most excruciating gyrations.

"I wan' you so badleee," screams Coverdale.

Blackmore's guitar is now twelve feet in the air, now crashed down against the stage, and seven-eighths smashed before a roadie runs on with a replacement for the final riffs.

Then they're away, gone. Of course they'll get called back for an encore, but the audience has to wait over six minutes — until, right on a screaming crescendo, they're back. "More! More! More!"

THERE'S to be a party aboard the Star-Ship tonight, to finish off all the undrunk champagne and to say goodbye to the roadies.

None of the band are given to any hype about how big they are, although they're well aware of how successful they're becoming, and how unique among British bands in having cracked the American market first go.

They are all more than enthusiastic about their next US tour (in August) for which they'll be hiring the Star-Ship again if they can get it. But for now it's all eyes on the road for their British tour.

Apparently they've sold out the Hammersmith Odeon in a record seven minutes. No wonder, as it's been a long time since Britain got a look at this home-grown billion-dollar proposition.

HOW DO YOU START unravelling such a Heavy Metal Yarn without resorting to the unlikely ploy of getting you, the loyal reader, to imagine yourself on a train bound for Dundee where, out of the corner of your eye, you note a plump, almost-pretty girl of 19 staring dreamily through the carriage window at a strange hallucination involving herself and Deep Purple's moody-guy guitarist, Ritchie Blackmore?

Her name is Muriel. She has chapped lips, rumpled purple jeans, hat and jacket and she comes from Paris.

Muriel loves Ritchie Blackmore so badly she just spend eight days sleeping rough at Heathrow's arrival lounge waiting for him to dock in from Los Angeles. Blackmore never did show up, having detoured via Gatwick Airport.

Muriel rethought her strategy, checked in at Kings Cross station and bought a ticket for Dundee. Tonight, Thursday, she'll be around for Deep Purple's first British gig in 18 months.

And that means first night jelly-legs all round, despite the ecstasies of a grand-slam American tour and a well-regarded new album called "Burn" that came close to demolishing the old Purple stereotype that had them cast alongside Sabbath as the all-time leaden-headed dullards of British rock.

Inevitably, they've been hit by another bout in a plague of disorders that seems to accompany their every grandiose scheme. In recent times they've seen two American tours blown out by attacks of hepatitis on group members; then there was the Montreux fiasco in which the local casino crashed to the ground in flames at the very mention of the band's name.

Purple's latest troubles involve vocalist Dave Coverdale, former principal boy in Redcar's Fabulosa Brothers, who flew back from the States to the news that his father, apparently in good shape before the American tour, was dying in a Teeside hospital.

Coverdale was by his father's bed for the last hours and the next day, the Thursday, joined the band at the Tay Centre hotel, Dundee, just two minutes removed from the Caird Hall where two and a half thousand expectant locals were waiting for their first glimpse of Coverdale and another new boy called Glenn Hughes.

THIS IS THE new revitalised, vitamin-drenched Purple that's been designed to erase memories of an ego-maimed

■ *Continues over page*

April 27, 1974

Metal report

■ *From over page*

By ANDREW TYLER
Pics PENNIE SMITH

five piece that finally erupted into many parts following a Japanese tour last June.

Ian Gillan, the glamour-puss vocalist who is attributed with most of the blame for the wreckage, has not been gravely missed by fans after all, and, ever since his departure, has been behaving with mysterious unpredictability.

The least likely of his interests is an investment in a motor cycle scramble team that is only marginally less credible than his purchase of the old De Lane Lea studios in London's Kingsway, now renamed Kingsway Recorders.

"Ian apparently got the place for a song," reports Purple's prudent organist Jon Lord, "and although it seems to have been a strange thing to do, it's worked out well. He's already had people like Wings and Beck down. And we've also been along to do a bit of mixing."

The other Purple member who hasn't been sorely missed is bassist/producer Roger Glover. According to Lord, Glover became more and more weary and ill as the group's personality disorders reached new levels of absurdity.

"The main personality conflicts were between Ritchie and Ian," says Lord, "and that led to a general feeling of lethargy among everyone in the band. Towards the end we didn't even bother talking to each other.

"It got to the point where Ian was travelling to gigs in a separate car and was booking in at a separate hotel. I don't think it was really Ian's fault or Ritchie's fault. It's just one of those intangible things."

Glover, it seems, was rarely more than a victim of the internal squabblings and, being "a very sensitive person", was markedly affected by the carryings on between Gillan and Blackmore.

"But I sometimes get the feeling he's kind of sorry he ever left," says Lord. "Everything is so much tighter these days".

Including Muriel, who's now hurtling across the banked seats behind the Caird Hall stage picking off members of the road crew through her plastic camera and recording crowd noises as a final check for the band's performance.

This is the same hall, with its maze of dusty corridors, attics and fire doors that the Strawbs played the previous night to an uncomfortable number of empty seats.

Wedged between the likes of Mick Ronson and Deep Purple, the Strawbs never had a hope, and reportedly left Dundee extremely disgruntled by the whole affair.

Ronson was also reported to have done no more than "reasonably well", yet tonight the turnout is patently more encouraging. Even so, promoter Harvey Goldsmith is billowing around in college-boy garb, his face bleached by expectations of power failures, riots and bomb attacks.

"It's noisy isn't it?" he says after the opening set by ELF. "I'm not used to all this noise."

ELF are Purple's American adoptees — a small-town rock five-piece Purple ran into two years ago and have now absorbed into the Purple Records network.

Band leader is a minute, hollow-eyed singer called Ronnie Dio, a friendly man with a sharp sense of vocal dynamics and an arresting writing style. The whole band are dwarf-like, largest of the bunch being Stephen (don't call me Steve) Edwards, who clips the 5ft 9 mark, drives a Porche 911T and plays lead guitar.

The sound system is rampantly haywire. From side and front stage, all you can make out is an explosion of electric metal that does no credit at all to their finely sculpted pieces. Micky Lee Soule, the band's pretty-boy pianist, provides an interesting variant by way of acoustic piano, a Steinway that he later reports to be "kinda in tune".

There are markings of Lennon and McCartney in their writing and a feeling of Free-verging-on-Beck in their playing. But the sound is such an awful blarrp, it foils them at every turn.

THE FIREPOWER IS stepped up several hundred watts for Purple's set. Either you fall to the ground in pain or join in the revivalist fervour and let the whole spectacle wash you clean. Kids explode into a besotted rage as soon as the lights fall on Blackmore, who hammers open the intro to "Burn".

Half the crowd are doing a weird one-legged Purple stagger that takes them careering around the hall crashing into startled security men. Sabbath crazees specialise in the hunched-up double-barrelled victory salute whereas Purple freaks want nothing so crass. Their finishing touch is a wild, one-armed royal wave that can be performed as a companion to the Purple Stagger or from a seated position and embellished with a simple neanderthal grunt.

Stranger still are the activities on stage, where each Purple member has his own tortured brand of patented self-expression. Most subtle and absorbing of all are the worm movements of Ritchie Blackmore, whose singed hair and black wet-look shirt and slacks give him just the right air of brooding chicness, except we've seen most of it before from Jimmy Page.

You're dealing with things like harmonic feedback that so-called greats like Andres Segovia know nothing about.

RITCHIE BLACKMORE

Blackmore exhibits the same black arrogance offstage, making him the least likeable and the most interesting of the whole Purple crew.

Dave Coverdale's technique is the illusion of sustained orgasm. His chief prop is a telescopic mike stand that he opens and closes at crotch level all the while pouting, jabbing out his chin and punching a fist in the air.

Bassist Glenn Hughes's epileptic mannerisms fall somewhere between those of Coverdale and the stripped-off, trench-digging style of drummer Ian Paice. Jon Lord kneels, leans and poses by his keyboards — and is little more absorbing than a man at a workbench.

Again the sound is fuzzed over, and Coverdale and Hughes' two-tone harmonics glop together and stew along in the general furore. There's still the feeling that Purple are out for easy crowd reaction via demonstrations of firebrand aggro, as against reaching for the kind of music that's well within their reach.

Blackmore in particular is a fine and underrated player who, despite his excellence on the recorded versions of tracks like "Burn" and "Mistreated", goes loop-brained the minute he's faced with a crowd.

And the kind of neatly-flexed dynamics present on most Zeppelin tracks are nowhere to be found in the bustle of "Might Just Take Your Life" or "You Fool No-one".

But just tell any of that to the crowd, who are so sticky with delight even Patsy and Jim of Artist Services are milling around with more than their usual air of casual involvement. And that pair have been around for the worst nights of Led Zep and the Stones.

It's an enormous reception, naturally. By the time the band's two hour set is through, most of the kids are totally spent and flop together in a tight little wad against the front of the stage.

"It's getting bleedin' hot up here," shouts Glenn. The crowd wheezes along in agreement.

Jon Lord, shirt buttons popped open and dragging on a cigarette like some wolfish cardsharp, breaks up the set to introduce the two new boys: Glenn, who they stole from Trapeze after watching the band at the Marquee; and Dave, who was spirited away from a Redcar boutique and sounds as close to Paul Rodgers as dammit.

"Yarrr. Yarr. Yarrr. Pupple. Pupple," the crowd yell back. They go completely wanton for "Fire On The Water" and other hot tricks circa Gillan and Glover.

The final section degenerates into some dogged solo playing that has no visible point of departure or re-entry and probably exists as Purple's answer to all those critics who say they don't know a semi-tone from a Buster Keaton movie.

The encore is Don Nix's "Going Down", and you can just spot the muscular frame of a bouncer pinned the wrong way round against the stage front. Earlier he'd walked his rippling biceps several times past Jim and Patsy, but this man has no brains to get caught in a situation of that sort.

THE SHOW'S DONE with, and now the real fun starts up.

Several girls have been prised free from the crowd by the band's "entertainments director", and three or four make it back to the Tay Centre lounge. Muriel's there too and her story gets more and more bizarre.

Just 20 minutes into the gig, just as the band struck up "Mistreated", Muriel began sobbing with joy. She worried the local bouncers so much that they dragged her from the hall and topped her up with tranquillisers.

The more they wrestled her down, the more Muriel sobbed. It was only for the final moments of the gig that she was allowed back in. Even then it was under the close scrutiny of commissionaires who shut out her view of her beloved Ritchie.

"It's really the music I care about," she said sadly. "It's not so much the boys. I don't think they really care for me that much. I don't think they care at all."

But Muriel has technique. And it keeps her with food, drinks and a place to crash.

"Would you tell everyone in your paper about my new fan club? It's called Purple Stars International Fan Club. I want to get interviews and pictures and music tapes but I don't have money to do it right now. Tell them to write to 6 London Street, Paddington, W.2."

OK Muriel.

Most of the band slip away early, but ELF, roadcrew and assorted strays hang in there consuming unseemly amounts of beer and scotch.

A chick in a leopardskin coat is storming around the lounge in a drunken daze, falling into people's laps. At one point she looks set to get to business with a small man with a swollen chest but winds up with one of ELF instead.

Glenn Hughes is lolling about with a bottle of lemonade muttering "Kirkaldy, Kirkaldy." But enough of all that.

The next morning we get the real lowdown from Jon Lord, who drives us in a rented car from Dundee to Edinburgh for gig number two: The Edinburgh Odeon.

"Both ELP and ourselves have had the same sort of criticism at one time or another," he acknowledges. "You know, overloud, over-indulgent. But if it worries them as much as it worries us, they can't be very bothered. As it happens I like what Keith does very much."

That's very strange. What are we to make of those reports from the San Diego Speedway gig of tussles over which act was to be the star turn?

"All that was more to do with the management thing. I don't think either of the bands seriously cared that much. As a matter of interest, it was a joint top. We got the opportunity to choose when we'd go on and we chose sunset. ELP went on last, during the dark.

"But it even got down to quibbling about whose name was to go on the left side of the poster because, apparently, that's the most prominent spot in the natural line of vision."

ELP have had similar criticisms . . . overloud, over-indulgent. If it worries them as much as it worries us, they can't be very bothered.

JON LORD

Yeah. So whose name did go on the left?

"Ours did, as a matter of fact."

Uhuh.

Purple and ELP seem to have been getting tangled with each other for some time now, either in terms of similarities or via acute points of departure.

Both crews, for instance, seem to be playing the my-amp's-bigger-than-your-amp game (Don't believe what they tell you," says Purple's Professor, "no other band's got this amount of volume").

Then there are those comparisons with Birmingham dementoids, Black Sabbath.

"Obviously criticism sometimes hurts. I still believe in valid criticism, providing it's constructive and doesn't resort to attacks on personalities. But it doesn't happen too often now . . . touch wood.

"I know Ozzie and the rest of Sabbath get a lot of it. But I saw him on the plane the other day and he looked very happy. They must be a really thick-skinned lot because they didn't look down at all."

PURPLE ARE ALSO happy. Especially with the way personnel difficulties have been resolved with hardly a stitch out of place. Yet Blackmore, in particular, is at great pains to conceal his one-time vision of a refurbished line-up including vocalist Paul Rodgers.

"It was around the time of the Japanese dates that we knew it was all over. We already knew Roger was leaving and had asked Glenn to join us, and our thoughts for a new singer were automatically for Paul Rodgers. Paul said he wanted to think about it, and although he didn't commit himself we could detect nice positive kinds of vibes.

"Then someone broke the story. I think it was one of our secretaries at the office, and there was this front page story in one of the papers.

"Paul got the idea that we'd leaked the story deliberately to pressure him. And that more or less clinched it. Island phoned him up and said 'What's all this about you joining Purple?' because at the time he was in the process of forming Bad Company, Paul said there was nothing to it. And that was that.

"Ritchie and I had set our hearts on it but, being objective about the whole thing, I think he believed he wouldn't have been able to project himself as much in a band like Purple.

"So that left us high and dry and we went through this doldrum period.

"Then these tapes started arriving from prospective singers. More than 500 of them. We listened to the first 150 and got more and more disillusioned. Some of them were hilarious, most of them were awful and would have made worthy Monty Python material.

"Some came with really strange letters like the one guy who said 'I'm very good looking, at least my mother says I am. I've had no experience but I know I could be a star and get the girls excited'."

There was a real chance the band would crack for all time, says Lord. Conflict was mounting. Everyone was gripped in lethargy, and there seemed to be no-one around with the right kind of voice to fill for Gillan.

"Then Dave's tape arrived and it stuck out like a diamond. He was doing 'Everybody's Talking' with his mates from the Fabulosa Brothers and it was a really strong masculine voice that we knew was right."

So whatever happened to Gillan?

"When he first joined the band he was one of the lads, just a regular bloke. And then something happened to him. Success, I suppose. But he was a fighter was Gillan. Totally caught up in everything. He wanted it all to be right and good, and that's why it's so sad it ended the way it did."

And Blackmore? He seems like a cagey bird.

"You have to work at Ritchie. I've known him seven years and I still have to check myself occasionally and remember that when he says something it's just Ritchie being honest. He wouldn't pull a punch for a million dollars, yet he quite honestly believes his opinions are not of that much value.

"I respect him for his honesty. I'm a bit of a coward when it comes to being upfront. I'm usually too much of a diplomat . . . "

SOON WE'RE pulling into Edinburgh's Carlton Hotel, a grub-faced old building strutting by the side of a road bridge and overlooking some old railway sheds. Lord takes to the hotel lounge where he snacks on pork sandwiches and a detective thriller, and the rest of the band evaporate into a fine afternoon, coming together just in time to tune up for the night's show at the Odeon.

And here Muriel's story climaxes on a predictably, obscure note: so brought down by the lack of attention from band members, Muriel commits the ultimate revolutionary act of catching the 8pm train to London in preference to watching Purple's show that night.

Last words were alleged to have been: "I don't like Deep Purple anymore."

ELF have already been on and have again been screwed to the ground by a lousy sound system. Purple also look to be in trouble when Oscar, the German road manager, drops and cracks the transistors in one of Lord's ARP synthesisers.

The same torrid scenes are repeated all over again as the rankled Purple monster goes strutting and pouting across the Odeon stage. If you're a believer, it's an enthralling business. If not, there are

■ *Continues page 50*

Players in the Heavy Metal Yarn: From top, DAVE COVERDALE, RITCHIE BLACKMORE and the unfortunate MURIEL — just a bit part.

Purple

■ *From page 7*

always the cotton swabs that Jim of Artist Services was passing around the previous night in Dundee. I can't believe very much of it and the two hours drag on and on.

It was round about this time I remembered reading how the brain was a 20 watt self-scrutinising symbol factory. No wonder I was having trouble dealing with 1700 watts that roughly translates into the sustained force of 110 dB that roughly translates into the spectacle of having your head sandwiched between a couple of duelling Mystere jets.

Jon Lord is leaning on his keyboards again in spasms of mock insanity; Blackmore shows glimpses of true ribaldry but snaps back into the familiar brutal posturing because it all gets to be too winky for the crowd. And the crowd hoot and sweat and holler for more volume.

Back at the hotel Blackmore says how it's all such a challenge and so much harder to play loud and keep it tapped down.

Come on Ritchie. Own up. How much control have you got when you're in one of your weirdo clobbering moods.

Are you really in full control? Aren't the crowd leading you down?

"No. But every now and then you have to make some sort of compromise. You name a musician that doesn't."

Hendrix never did. When the people howled for "Purple Haze", he gave them "Electric Ladyland."

"Did you know Hendrix?"

No. I didn't know Hendrix. Who says you have to know Hendrix?

"I *did* know Hendrix, and even Hendrix played crap towards the end. After 'Electric Ladyland' it just got worse and worse. 'Band of Gypsies' was nowhere. Face it."

Of course it was. But that was Hendrix falling apart. It had nothing to do with the man compromising for an audience.

This is going to get worse. We adjoin to a private corner to wrench the conversation to some sort of natural conclusion.

"It's a challenge to play hard because it's so much harder to control," says Blackmore. "You're dealing in things like harmonic feedback that the so-called greats like Andres Segovia know nothing about. All they know is what is taught in every guitar school. There's so much snobbery involved.

"People don't realise that to play like Segovia just requires a lot of practice whereas there's so much feel involved when you're dealing in things like harmonic feedback where, say, I'll hit an A and I'll hopefully hit a harmonic and, say, a D flat will come back at me. Which can be worked on.

"At the opposite end of the scale to Segovia is Jeff Beck who chances it every night and when it comes off it's music from another planet.

"A crowd's not musical. And you have to respect them. You can't say now I'm gonna play minor 4ths and 5ths and expect people to get off on it."

Now he's saying there's some kind of conspiratorial gullibility among rock writers. A built-in "attitude" to bands like Purple.

But don't you have any "attitudes" Ritchie? How about Slade, for instance, who you've already mentioned three times in the conversation?

"No. I don't have any attitude to Slade. I just think they're a people's band. But with Slade there's all sorts of musical prejudice because they have hits and it's easy to put them down. At the same time people say 'Oh well they're doing their best' let's leave it at that'.

"But then a band like Purple comes along that mixes thud with musical ability and we get worked over by the cynics and journalists."

But surely, if you have Slade's hit-making skills plus musical ability, why would anyone arbitrarily put you down?

"It's like if you're in a beauty competition and you see a girl with spots who's fat. You're not bothered by her because she's no competition. But if she's fat and spotty and goes out on a limb, people are going to criticise.

Does that mean Purple are the fat, spotty band that goes out on a limb?

The idea seemed so preposterous I didn't even catch Blackmore's reprise. Maybe he delivered some kind of telling blow. The next thing I remember is him staring at me and saying "... you can't answer that can you?"

The pair of us got more and more irate, calmed down, fed each other smarmy compliments and wound up regarding each other as fine human beings.

BUT THERE are more interesting things going on. Ian the band's "entertainments director", has gathered everyone together for a seance.

Everyone's so drunk. Nobody wants to group in formation. Nobody can be bothered to turn the lights down.

Ian bares his buttocks. Baz, the roadie, thrusts a lighted cigarette between his cheeks. Ian throws a table across the room and horrifies the night staff. But they don't do anything more than watch from a corner of the room. And neither do I.